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# A Study on Body Image Perceived by Female University Students Majoring Dance in Korea

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## Abstract

This study intends to identify the differences in perceived body images depending on dance genres and to analyze the causes. A total 798 female university students majoring dance were selected. Using the SPSS program, the ANOVA about each variable was. The results of this study are as follows: The body images perceived by female university students by dance genre, the Korean traditional dance-majoring students had the most positive body image. That can be discussed with three reasons. First, the Korean traditional dance costume doesn't expose or reveal the body of dancer wearing it. Second reason is the differences in dances' techniques. Third reason can be inferred from oriental traditional thought and philosophy.

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Keywords: body image; dance; Korean traditional dance; ballet; modern dance

## 1. Introduction

Here in Korean society, the trend considering the slender body as the ideal body type is significantly appeared due to the prosperity of diet culture. This trend ultimately becomes a serious social pathological phenomenon beyond simply individual's problem. The subjective image, judgment and attitude of all physical figures, including condition,

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appearance, function, stamina and health status related with one's body, form the body image of individual (Norris, 1978). This body image is formed by the complex action of one's belief, value, objective, personality and the other's opinion of the individual, and is greatly influenced socioculturally (Fujita, 1972; Rubin, 1968; Wassner, 1982). It is also an important element affecting the individual's physical and psychological wellbeing (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). In particular, women shows more negative tendency in perception of their body image than men. It is reported that women who are actually normal but think them obese give themselves lower marks related with their appearance in evaluation of body image than women who are actually obese (Cash & Hicks, 1990).

As for the dance majors who emphasize aesthetic expressiveness of body, dissatisfaction at their body image and its negative influence are more severe. As dancer's body type is as core as it can be described as strategy, it is very important to understand the process of body image forming and tendency. However, most of the studies on body image and dance focus on how the exaggerated and dominated ideal and prejudiced standard of thinness are made in dance environment (Lee & Park, 2007; Hwang, 2005). These viewpoints also led to the attention to how feeding disturbance and distorted image of body (Kim, 2007; Kim & Park, 2007) appeared among dancers. Thomson & Heinberd (1999) reported in their study, dance majors suffered from side effect such as neuropathy including feeding disturbance due to the obsession with excessively thin body type. Park, Lim, and Lee (2014) also found out in their study recently, negative body image of dance majors is a factor affecting their habit of binge. To put it concretely, they consider thinner body type than their present body as ideal, which is statistically significantly different on gender. It is identified body image is a significant factor explaining emotion and weight, subfactors of binge habit. Like this, it is found that as dance majors perceive excessively thin figure as the ideal body image, they have a body image different from their real one.

In some comparative studies comparing the people majoring the dance with the people not majoring the subject, it was revealed that the female university students majoring the dance had negative images about their bodies comparing to ones not majoring the subject (Na, Park, & Kim, 2011). The way of artistic beauty and dynamic expression in dance makes dancers aim for beautiful and well-shaped body more and more, and makes them perceive it as a tool and medium for professional expression technique. Interestingly, the influence of dance participant's body image was different according to dance type and characteristics (Downey, Reel, Soohoo, & Zerbib, 2010). Even though body is an important object and means for dancers' aesthetic expression and showy movement, the normal standard cannot be defined as that it is limited to extreme physical condition or ideal or has the absolute value. That is to say, it can pursue the physical ideal of the same way or can take a different viewpoint of open body image.

46 universities in Korea have the department of dance. These universities produce dance majors based on three genres such as Korean traditional dance, ballet and modern dance, according to classification standards that Korean higher educational institutions use. Accordingly, this study will consider as body image what dance majors in Korea evaluate and think their own body image of their appearance, body type, health and strength that they subjectively perceive, and will compare these. This study tried to show the differences of body image perceived by dance genre in detail and to analyze its cause.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Participants*

The participants of this research are female college students majoring in dance at 10 universities among 46 Korean universities with dance department. A total of 798 female college students majoring in dance at dance department of 10 universities in the country were selected by cluster random sampling. Their average height is 163.70cm and average weight is 50.39kg; and their detailed majors are distributed in the order of Korean traditional dance of 299 majors(37.5%), ballet of 283(35.5%), and modern dance 216(27.1%). As for the period of dance experience, 10-15 years occupied most with 317 majors(39.7%), followed by 5-10 years, more than 15 years and less than 5 years, in order.

Table 1. General characteristics of participants

		Content	
	Classification	Number	Proportion (%)
Dance genre	Korean traditional dance	299	37.5
	Ballet	283	35.5
	Modern dance	216	27.1
Dance experience	Less than 5 yrs.	96	12.1
	5-10 yrs.	198	24.8
	10-15 yrs.	317	39.7
	More than 15 yrs.	187	23.4
Year	1	176	22.1
	2	179	22.4
	3	271	34.0
	4	172	21.6

## 2.2. Materials

The test tool of body image used in this research is the scale of Body Self-Perception of Dancers used in Brena and Terry (2006). There are many tests for measuring body image, but this study selected one connoting the simplest and salient questions. Prior to the survey, this study conducted a preliminary test to verify validity and reliability of the test tool. The subjects of the preliminary test are 10 dance majors who have more than 15-year dance experience so are likely to deepest understand concepts and meanings of the questions. 2 professors of dance department and 2 doctors in dance psychology gathered together, and identified the understanding level of the questions and overlapping sentences and then modified based on the result of preliminary test. The test tool used for this study finally is the single-factor scale, which is composed of 10 questions in total. Answers are rated by the 5-point Likert scale: i.e. 'strongly agreed', 'agreed', 'neutral', 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed'. Cronbach's alpha, the internal consistency coefficient, was indicated .947 in this research.

## 2.3. Procedure

This study was conducted from August to December 2013. To collect data smoothly, the researcher explained this research purpose to dance department belonging to 10 universities beforehand and asked cooperation for survey. The researcher visited every university to explain the contents of research and carried out a survey. Research necessity and purpose were explained to research subjects for their understanding of measurement tool's meaning and they signed the consent form. The researcher gave appropriate answers for their questions and asked them to answer each question frankly. It took 10 minutes generally to complete survey, and the questionnaires were collected right after identifying if there were any non-response questions on the spot. 11 copies difficult to analyze due to non-response or overlapping response were excluded and a total of 798 copies were used.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

These research data were analyzed using SPSS Win 18.0 program. To investigate body image of female college students majoring in dance, descriptive statistics was conducted; and to verify the difference of body image by genre (Korean traditional dance, ballet and modern dance) ANOVA was carried out. And the Scheffé post-hoc test was carried out for significant findings. Significance level for hypothesis testing,  $\alpha$ , was set up as .05.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Descriptive statistics of body image by dance genre

The body image perceived by female college students by dance genre was indicated the highest point 36.80 in Korean traditional dance, followed by modern dance with 30.04 and ballet with 22.06. And as a result of Levene's homogeneity of variance test, significance probability was .052. As it cannot dismiss null hypothesis, dispersion of three groups by dance genre may be seen equal.

Table 2. Difference of body image by dance genre

Genre	Number	M±SD
Korean traditional dance	299	36.80±10.43
Ballet	283	22.06±4.07
Modern dance	216	30.04±5.85

#### 3.2. One-way ANOVA of body image by dance genre

To verify the difference of body image by dance genre, it was carried out the one-way ANOVA and the post-hoc test for the statistically significant difference (Table 3 and Table 4). F statistical value of three groups' mean difference by dance genre was 282.97, significance probability .000, which showed significant difference in body image perceived by female college students majoring in dance by genre, with .001 of significance level.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA of body image by dance genre

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	p
Genre	31624.64	2	15812.32	282.97	.000
Error	44424.23	795	55.88		
Total	76048.87	797			

\*\*\* $p < .001$

As a result of post-hoc test for statistically significant different three groups, the mean difference between body images perceived by Korean traditional dance majors and ballet majors was 14.74 and significance probability .000. The mean difference between body images perceived by Korean traditional dance majors and modern dance majors was 6.76 and significance probability .000. The mean difference between body images perceived by modern dance majors and ballet majors was 7.98 and significance probability .000. There was significant difference in body image among three groups with .001 of significance level.

Table 4. Post-hoc test analysis of body image by dance genre

	MD	SE	p
Korean traditional dance vs Ballet	14.74	.62	.000
Korean traditional dance vs Modern dance	6.76	.67	.000
Modern dance vs Ballet	7.98	.68	.000

\*\*\* $p < .001$

#### 4. Discussion

The existing studies on body image of dance majors in Korea have reported, dancers preferred as the ideal body image considerably thin frame, small face and long arms and legs (Hyun, 2009). And it is reported that although their body composition was lower than normal range, all three majors, Korean traditional dance, ballet and modern dance majors, preferred thinner body type than their real one, which was noticeable in women (Na, Park, & Kim, 2011).

But this perception of body image was not applied to all dance majors equally. While ballet has a remarkable tendency accompanying extremely restricted body image and feeding disturbance, modern dance has extensive body images despite restricted environment (Reel & Beals, 2005). This viewpoint was also dealt with in the studies on the body image of aesthetic sports players such as gymnastics and figure skating. Most of these studies pointed out players' distorted body image, in connection with miserable and prejudiced body image caused by feeding disturbance and negative effect on female health (Reel & Beals, 2009; Ryan, 1995). On the other hand, studies on the body image of belly dance proposed relatively broad perception and attitude towards body. That is to say, it is reported to accept a variety of body type comprehensively from the isomorphism theory\_ all the values reproduced through body and expected by exaggerated and dominated social common idea\_ and traditional aspect (Downey et al., 2010). In other words, dancers' thoughts of their body may be different, because other standards are applied, ranging both internal element of emotion expression and external elements such as attitude, energy, speed, space occupancy, costume harmony and composition of choreography.

This study identified that the body images perceived people majoring were originated from each dance genre's characteristics. That can be inferred from the differences seen from each genre dance's costume features. That can be discussed with three reasons. First, contrary to those of ballet or modern dance, the Korean traditional dance costume doesn't expose or reveal the body of dancer wearing it. Opposingly, the ballet costume makes a dancer wear a tight leotard extremely revealing the dancer's body, so the costume can be considered to influence on the ballet-majoring people's body perception. Second reason is the differences in dances' techniques. Comparing to those of modern dance, the dance movements in Korean traditional dance has the characteristic of curve sequency. Contrary to the ballet and the modern dance emphasizing the jump and the up-and-down movements, the Korean traditional dance's center of gravity tends to be concentrated on the hypogastric breathing and the lower body. Third reason can be inferred from oriental traditional thought and philosophy.

The 'Manners & Music Theory(禮樂思想)' and the 'Yin-Yang and Five Elements Theory' are based on Korean traditional dance, and the both oriental theories focus on understanding the thought and philosophy contained each dance motion rather than the externally revealing esthetic expressions.

The results of this study provide some suggestions to Korean excessive competition-around education field and Korean dance education field preferring for slender body type. The results recognize that the healthy body is important, not a slender body in the process making their own body images to the dancers preferring beautiful body types. Besides, some help based on medical, psychological knowledge should be given to dancers, so that they can acquire correct knowledge about health and methods to keep their healthy by themselves.

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